

Frequently Asked Questions

Below are some frequently asked questions received from States regarding the Support for Demonstration Ombudsman Programs Serving Beneficiaries of Financial Alignment Models for Medicare-Medicaid Enrollees funding opportunity announcement (FOA) CMS-1J1-13-001. Please note that first round applications are due by 3:00 PM ET on Monday, August 5, 2013. Second round applications are due on October 3, 2013 and third round applications are due on January 14, 2014. This document was last revised on July 18, 2013.

Regarding Grants.Gov

Where can I find a copy of the FOA?

The Funding Opportunity is posted at <http://www.grants.gov/search/search.do;jsessionid=ykFSRdGbpz5phLXty2LFjpQGCskcX1fVMfdGvILvZ2bNnhwjS1GV!1585022828?oppId=236917&mode=VIEW>. The funding opportunity number is CMS-1J1-13-001. The CFDA number is 93.634. If you experience any technical difficulties with www.grants.gov, please contact 1-800-518-4726.

Regarding Eligibility

Are only financial alignment states eligible for ombudsman funding?

States that do not have an approved Financial Alignment demonstration are not eligible to receive an award.

Is my state eligible to apply without a signed MOU?

Based on the “Eligible Applicants” section on page 20, a state may apply without a signed MOU. However, the state will need a signed MOU in order to receive an award. Although you may apply before your state has a signed MOU, we encourage you to take a close look at the due dates to determine the most appropriate date for your respective state to apply. States may want to consider waiting for the October or January application rounds in order to allow more time to finalize demonstration design with CMS, which will inform a more complete and accurate application.

Regarding Award

If we apply without an MOU what happens to our application? Applications that meet the eligibility threshold criteria and include the required documents will proceed through the review process described on page 39 of the FOA. Since the signed MOU is required before a Notice of Award is issued, an official notice of award will not be issued until a state has a signed MOU.

Regarding Evaluation Criteria

Will the lack of a signed MOU affect our application's score?

A team of staff from HHS and potentially other outside experts will assess each application using the evaluation criteria described on pages 36-39 of the FOA. A signed MOU is not part of the evaluation criteria.

Will the review panel have access to the MOU?

The objective review panel will assess the application, including appendices, using the evaluation criteria described on pages 36-39 of the FOA. The panel will not consider outside sources in their review, such as MOUs or other grant applications.

Regarding Other Funding

How does the Ombudsman Funding Opportunity Announcement (CMS-1J1-13-001) relate to the Implementation Support for State Demonstrations to Integrate Care (SDIC) (CMS-1I1-13-001)?

States that qualify for and receive SDIC funding can still apply for this FOA, even if some of the implementation funding was for ombudsman activities. However, the applicant must explain how funding will not be duplicative or supplant funding, as requested in section 2.4.d on pages 34-35 and V.1.4, Budget and Budget Narrative as described on pages 38-39 of the FOA. Awards for the ombudsman FOA must be additive to current activities and cannot assume that states will repurpose other funds. In section II.2 on page 18 of the FOA we clarify that States may not use this funding to supplant or duplicate funding from other funding sources, including from the SDIC FOA and the Consumer Assistance Program. States that received an award from another source may be required to submit additional documentation to CMS to ensure that those funds are not being used for the purposes identical to those that will be funded under this FOA.

Can this funding be used to fund year three of an ombudsman program, where the state received SDIC funding for years one and two for the ombudsman program?

A state must request different services in years one and two other than the services which were requested in the SDIC funding. Then, the state may make a request for funding ombudsman services in year three.

If a state can use this opportunity to fund activities in year three where SDIC funding was received for years one and two, what is the amount of cost sharing for years one and two under the ombudsman opportunity?

See the answer to the question immediately above. There is no cost sharing under the ombudsman opportunity.

Regarding Activities That Can Be Funded

Could we add FTEs through the Ombudsman funding opportunity?

Consistent with 2 CFR Part 225, states may be able to fund salaries through this funding opportunity. As stated on page 34, states may not use funding to supplant state, local or private funding of infrastructure or services such as staff salaries. As described on page 38, states should outline their request in their proposed budget. States, however, should keep in mind that funds should be focused on service to beneficiaries rather than administration of the Demonstration.

Could we add functions or responsibilities to existing Ombudsman offices that are funded through other sources?

As indicated above, any Ombudsman services that are funded must not duplicate any services that are already funded by an alternative funding mechanism. Funding may also not be used to substitute for existing state or Medicaid-funded ombudsman programs or services as described on page 4 of the FOA). A State may choose to expand the scope or services provided by an Ombudsman Office, so long as such expansion is clearly delineated in the State's application and specific to the State's Financial Alignment demonstration.

Regarding Award Amount

How will funding be allocated across the States? Does the size of the demonstration factor into award decisions?

Each state will be eligible for base funding of \$125,000 for the first year and \$75,000 for the second and third years. Additional funding will be based on the number of enrollees participating in the demonstration. Further, consideration will be given to the geographic distribution of the enrollee population. Please refer to Section II (Award Information) on page 18.

How does a state know how much to request to create an ombudsman program?

In determining how much it would cost to create an ombudsman program to support the Financial Alignment Demonstration, a state should reference the costs per enrollee associated with other ombudsman programs operating in the state. In addition, states may want to reference costs associated with creating Consumer Assistance Programs under the Affordable Care Act.

Will applying in the later rounds disadvantage a state because earlier awards might use up all available funding?

No.

Regarding the SF-424A Budget Form Page

Do we include all three years on the SF-424A page?

Per page 30 of the FOA:

The program is funded in three, 12-month budget periods. On the SF424A Section A– Budget Summary, please use Row 1 for year 1, Row 2 for year 2, and Row 3 for year 3. On the SF424A Section B Budget Categories, please use Column 1 for the first 12-month budget period, Column 2 for the second 12-month budget period, and Column 3 for the third budget period. In Section C Non-Federal Resources, please use one row for each year of the project. Section D should be completed by dividing the year 1 total into the amounts needed in each quarter. Section E should reflect the total federal funds requested for future funding periods. Column B (First) should reflect year 2 and Column C (Second) should reflect year 3.

Regarding Project Periods

How long are the project periods?

Project periods will run three years from the date of award as stated on page 11. The official project period will be shown on the Notice of Award.

Do the budget periods align with the Demonstration Years in the State's Financial Alignment MOU?

No. The project periods run three years from the date of award (see page 11) and are not derived from or connected to the Demonstration years described in the State's Financial Alignment MOU.

Regarding Carryover of Funds

Can funds be carried over from one year to the next?

In order to use funds remaining at the end of a budget period in a future year, a formal carryover request would need to be submitted to the grants management specialist and program officer. Approval would be documented via a formal revision to the Notice of Award.

Regarding conference travel to the Baltimore/Washington Area

The FOA mentions that there are two trips to Washington D.C. Please clarify if this is a maximum of two trips per year.

Applicants should budget for two trips over the course of the cooperative agreement.

Regarding the Number of Applications

Can a state with two models submit more than one application?

Only one application per state and/or model will be accepted.

Regarding conflicts of interest

Please clarify the section on page eight in relation to State Medicaid agencies running their own ombudsman programs.

The FOA does not specifically prohibit a State Medicaid agency or any other specific agency from operating an ombudsman program. In reviewing applications, CMS will evaluate, among other things, whether "the applicant adequately describes how the principles and capabilities set forth in Section 4.1.a . . . will be met by the State or designated entity hosting the Demonstration Ombudsman Program." Refer to page 37 of the FOA.

For reference, Section 4.1.a (pp. 7-10) includes:

- credibility with beneficiaries (this paragraph includes freedom from conflicts of interest and provides examples),
- accessibility to beneficiaries, authorized to access information needed to investigate complaints;
- coordinated with other entities in order to resolve beneficiary problems;
- capable of identifying trends and emerging issues; and
- adequate capacity of the agency or entity.